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Considering Seeking Help from a Psychologist?

*An Introductory Guide to Services a
Psychologist May Provide and
Your Rights as a Client*

The Washington State Examining Board of Psychology is comprised of seven psychologists and two public members from communities throughout the State. We invite you to take a few minutes to understand the qualifications of a psychologist and your rights as a client.

What Is A Psychologist?

A psychologist holds a doctoral degree from an accredited university. A licensed psychologist

- * has completed post-doctoral supervised patient contact
- * passed a written and oral examination given by the Washington State Examining Board of Psychology

Please note that a registered or certified counselor is not required to have the doctoral education, training, or experience that a licensed psychologist is required to complete. In addition, licensed psychologists are also required to continue learning new concepts, approaches and skills, which the Board monitors.

Psychologists may be specialists in clinical, consultative or research areas. Their doctoral programs are built on a foundation of scientific psychology with courses in social and biological bases of behavior. In addition, they have completed intensive study and research in a specialty.

Issues addressed by psychologists

Abuse: sexual, physical, emotional	Head injury
Addiction: e.g., alcohol, drugs, gambling	Learning disabilities/problems
AIDS and HIV	Lifestyle issues
Anxiety	Medical: cancer, stroke
Attention deficit disorder	Palliative care
Autism	Physical disabilities
Behavior problems	Psychiatric disorders
Chronic pain	Separation, Divorce
Cognitive Issues: giftedness, limitations	Sexuality
Death and dying	Sexual dysfunction
Depression	Sports and Performance
Eating disorders	

Services provided by psychologists

Adoption assessment	Group therapy
Alcohol/addiction counseling	Hypnosis
Assessment and diagnosis	Individual therapy
Bereavement counseling	Mediation
Brief therapy	Organizational consultation
Child in need of protective assessment	Program evaluation
Cognitive retraining	Pain control
Consultation	Play therapy
Couple therapy	Research
Crisis intervention	Separation/divorce counseling
Custody and access assessment	Sexual counseling
Desensitization training	Smoking cessation counseling
Disability assessments	Social skills training
Educational counseling	Stress management
Educational evaluation	Treatment for abusive partners
Family therapy	

Court reports and testifying may involve psychologists

Ability to parent	Motor vehicle accidents
Child custody and access	Parenting ability
Client functioning	Psychological status
Diagnosis for psychiatric problem	Psychosis
Coping styles	Release on parole
Incapacity	Sentencing
Intellectual ability	Sexual abuse
Likelihood to re-offend	

What is the Washington State Examining Board of Psychology?

Washington State law provides for a board that consists of seven psychologists and two public members appointed by the Governor for five-year terms.

The overall task of the Board is to protect consumers of psychological services. The specific function of the Examining Board of Psychology includes adopting rules that clarify and facilitate adherence to the law. The Board examines qualifications of applicants for licensure and determines whether persons may be licensed as psychologists. The Board investigates and rules on consumer complaints and takes disciplinary action against psychologists as necessary.

What Are Your rights As A Client?

The laws and rules (Chapters 18.83 and 18.130 and chapter 246-924 Wac) that regulate psychologists are intended to protect the public by helping to ensure the competency of psychologists. These laws include client protections and rights. You have the right to:

Disclosure: Prior to the beginning of a treatment program with a psychologist in private practice, expect to receive a written disclosure statement with general information on the psychologist's background, experience, theoretical orientation and approach to services. Fees and payment arrangements must be clearly stated. The statement must inform you that you may at any time refuse treatment or request a change in approach.

Treatment Plan: Expect your psychologist to assess your needs and develop a treatment plan based on psychological theory and research. You have a right to be informed about your treatment plan, to have input into it, and to request changes in it.

Confidentiality: Your visits to a psychologist are generally privileged and cannot be disclosed to any other person, unless you give consent.

Among notable exceptions are:

- * If you are a danger to yourself or others.
- * If the information involves the abuse of a child, developmentally disabled person or dependent adult.
- * If you spy your psychologist is required by a court to disclose information.

There are additional circumstances where information may be released without your authorization as stated in the Uniform Health Care Information Act (Chapter 70.02 RCW).

The details of confidentiality must be presented in the disclosure statement. Ask your psychologist to discuss this if you have questions.

Complaint Process: The psychologist's disclosure statement must be clear regarding how any concerns you may have about services can be resolved and how to reach the Examining Board of Psychology if major concerns cannot be resolved. Laws pertaining to psychologist (Chapter 18.130 RCW) provides for the investigation and resolution of complaints against psychologists.

What Is Unprofessional Conduct?

The laws and rules pertaining to the practice of psychology in Washington establish what is unprofessional conduct by psychologists. For example, it is unprofessional conduct for your psychologist to:

- * Be involved with you on a personal level (for example: borrow money from you, attend social events you, exchange birthday gifts with you)
- * Have sexual contact with you
- * Inappropriately reveal your confidences
- * Charge fees for services not provided, misrepresent services or charge excessively
- * Practice psychology while impaired by alcohol or drugs

You may request a copy of the relevant laws that specify unprofessional conduct and code of ethics from the Board by calling (360) 236-4910.

Be An Informed And Careful Consumer:

If you decide to seek psychological services, be sure the person is licensed. Carefully read the disclosure statement and have your questions answered.

Be informed about the services you will be provided and understand that you may request changes or refuse services. A responsible licensed psychologist will be glad to answer your questions about their training, experience, office practice, assessment and treatment procedures, and will help you find another professional if you should desire.

Contact the Board at (360) 236-4910 if you wish to confirm that a psychologist you are considering is licensed, if you have a concern or complaint, or if you would like a copy of the relevant laws. Or you may contact our web site at: www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/hpqad/psychologists/default.htm.



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